

Dear Senator Catherine Osten, Senator Paul Formica, and Representative Toni Walker:

I am writing to you to express my concern at the news that ACES Educational Center for the Arts is facing a \$500,000 budget reduction for the 2017-2018 academic year. ACES ECA is an amazing program that offers its students an unparalleled experience. It not only provides a crucial leg up in the artistic world but an extended family as well. I would not be the person I am today if I had not attended ECA.

I graduated from ECA's Theatre Department in 2011. My time at ECA provided me with a sense of belonging and purpose. The incredibly qualified staff and teachers became my mentors and role models while my classmates became my family. Master classes taught by guest working artists such as Drama Desk Award-nominated Kim Weild's Viewpoints or playwright Staci Swedeen's Scriptwriting gave students new and exciting experiences as well as valuable insight into the industry. Through many productions, I was able to learn how to work in an ensemble comprised of vastly different people, a skill I found vital to post academic work life. Classes such as Voice & Speech and Scene Study taught me how to make myself a presence and communicate in front of large groups of people. I was even given the opportunity to become a stage manager, which expanded my interest to the technical side of theatre.

The theatre department allowed me to spend my senior year exploring this new interest through a technical theatre independent study, where I received one-on-one tutoring with the Technical Director on how to design, draft, and implement a lighting plot. Because of this I was able to attend University of North Carolina School of the Arts for lighting. This enabled me to intern at Electronic Theatre Controls (ETC), one of the foremost lighting manufacturers in the industry. After graduating in 2015, I now live in NYC making a living in this industry. I teach for ETC as well as work for a wide variety of companies such as CNN, Fox, the Rangers and Knicks at Madison Square Garden, the Westminster Dog Show and more. None of this would be possible without the start I got at ECA.

I urge you to protect ACES Educational Center for the Arts. ECA was crucial to my career and formed connections that have only gotten stronger. Other students should be able to experience the same opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Eilbott

75 Pond View Circle
Guilford, CT 06437